1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Silwa

and evidencing practically no difference in architecture, style or number of storeys, as there are no two-storey houses in the village. Members of each sex dress more or less alike, and the observing of this convention is a very important factor in social equality. Their maxim in this connection is 'Eat what you yourself like, but dress according to what others like'. Yet all this does not mean that they are entirely identical, and the differences are usually in quantity and not in kind. The headman of the village—'Omda'—may have more clothes than others, but his clothes are the same type of clothes tailored in the same style; he may have a larger house than his neighbour but both are built in the same style with the same kind of furniture, the same sanitary arrangements and cooking facilities. The villagers do not divide themselves into 'the rich' and 'the poor'. Strengthening this sense of equalitarianism are the kinship ties where all the members of the village are inextricably connected with each other by family ties and obligations, this being reinforced by the sense of brotherhood amongst Moslems as enjoined upon them by the Koran.

With respect to the position of children in the village, they are certainly considered as an economic asset from the age of five. They constitute the labour-force in a community where hired labour is very difficult to procure. With not many expenses needed for their upbringing, and with the tangible labour they undertake, the burden of rearing children is offset; for although they are consumers, they are, even more so, contributors to the family resources. Children are also a means of providing parents with leisure and prestige, and every new child provides his or her older sibling with more opportunities for respite and leisure. Their economic contributions are enlisted by a gradual process of training, first through actual help in the farm activities, this being followed by the assignment of specific tasks to them, according to their age and physical abilities.

It must also be emphasized that these conditions and attitudes obtain in a village of small landholders. It is a matter for enquiry to find whether the same conditions prevail in villages where large-size ownership of the 'landed gentry' is the basis of economic life. It must be remembered that distribution of land in Egypt shows a great deal of unevenness. Out of 5,857,258 feddans of cultivable land in 1942, 2,160,219 feddans were owned by 12,103 persons out of the total number of owners amounting to 2,550,579. Of these owners 93 per cent held less than 5 feddans each and were in possession of only 31 per cent of the land. In 1939, owners of plots over 20 feddans constituted but 1·5 per cent of the total number of landowners, and these possessed just over 50 per cent of the total land.[1]

This system of land ownership in Egypt has nothing to do with legal Islamic institutions, apart from the Islamic law of inheritance. Such maldistribution of land is mainly due to the Ottoman regime and the reign of Muhammad Ali. The Land Code of 1858 and Land Registration Law of

[1] See *Pocket Census of Egypt*, 1948. Wendell Cleland, 'A Population Plan for Egypt', in *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, 1939.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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should be declined by saying, 'God compensates me in a better way'.

The following three instances are concrete situations showing the working of the social structure. The first is the installation of a new corn mill by all the clans in the village to bring to an end the monopoly of the already existing privately owned mill. The rough estimates were divided into 24 kirats (parts), each section responsible for collecting the money equivalent to its 12 kirats.[1] In the second process of distribution, each section divides its share amongst the clans, and the head of each clan is responsible for collecting his share from family heads; by dividing his kirats into sahms, the people of his clan could buy a minimum of one-tenth of a sahm. No section or clan could be helped or its shares be taken by another. It was interesting to listen to the village crier calling out the names of the clans and the two sections, to induce haste in collecting the money.

Such procedure was followed for repairing the village mosque. In this case the question was not so much that of collecting money, as of recruiting the men to bring stone, water, straw, etc., for the repairs; and this was also dealt with on the same structural basis.

The third instance was the allocation of new building land to the village, which was also first divided into two sections; then each section was divided into equal parts amongst its clans, which in turn had to divide its share among the families.

The system of village government reflects a combination of central authority agents and the village social organization. The village head is an official called 'Omda' who used to be elected from a list of five people who own not less than 10 feddans. Two years ago, the law was changed and the Omda is now elected from amongst thirteen people who own enough land to make them eligible. The job is unpaid, and it is reckoned as a privilege to be elected. The Omda's seniority is something like the medieval *primus inter pares*. He represents the village on official occasions. One of his traditional and honorary functions is to receive guests, travellers, and government officials in his guest house. Silwa has also two unpaid 'Sheikhs' each representing one of the two sections of the village and thus commonly referred to as 'Sheikh hissa'; these are also elected from amongst those who are eligible (minimum requirement was 5 feddans, now being relaxed). The Omda and the two sheikhs settle the disputes that arise in the village, usually with the aid of Arab councils, or with the help of people whom they select on different occasions. Each sheikh is primarily concerned with the problems of his section (hissa).

The central government is represented by the police headquarters with a police officer or constable in charge and policemen and ghafeers. While the policemen are always from outside the village, the ghafeers are villagers, put up usually from different clans, acting as the Omda's messengers, as well as the local agents between the village and the police headquarters.

[1] The feddan has 24 kirats, and each kirat 12 sahms.

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

578 593 Another dispute between two brothers was where the younger accused the older of being a spendthrift, and in his extravagance, mainly due to his wife, he 'spoilt' the reputation of the family by borrowing from other people though he earned more than his younger brother. In spite of the often repeated admonition of the younger, the older brother persisted in his ways. The misunderstanding became acute when both agreed to build a new house, the younger undertaking the expenses of the building, to be paid by his brother for his share, which he had not done. The dispute flared up again when the older brother got his daughter married without consulting the younger brother.

578 622 595 Another dispute which has been dragging on for a considerable time is that over the office of 'Omda'. For the last fifty years the office had been in one family. The death of the previous Omda started the strife between his sons from different mothers. He had six children from one wife and five from another. During his lifetime, the two houses united in service and respect for the father in spite of the seamy side of relationship. Immediately he died ten years ago, the suppressed rivalries and jealousies flared up. The sons disagreed as to who was to be elected for the office. An Arab council met and decided to put up the second son from the first wife (as the first son was illiterate).[1] The other house had to submit to the decisions of the council; yet the rivalry never died down, and the brothers from the other house still waited their chance. After devious intrigues, the Omda was suspended for corrupt conduct related to the system of rationing. After the lengthy court procedures which took almost a whole year, he was found not guilty. The time for filling the vacant post of Omda came, and the deposed Omda as well as the eldest brother of the other house entered their names officially as candidates. It is interesting to note that the three surviving uncles of the two candidates were with the new one. [604] One of the main reasons for their not supporting the deposed Omda was that he did not treat them as paternal uncles as they expected him to do. Moreover, on certain occasions he insisted that they should stand for him, as they used to do for his father—an attitude they resented. On the election day both the candidates went to the 'Mudeeriah' in Aswan, followed by dozens of their supporters. The new candidate gained the office this time; thereupon, the other house started their intrigues to depose him.

578 593 A mother quarrelled with her son because he did not give her as much attention and economic support as he did his wife. The son had to leave the village and took a domestic job in Cairo. The mother sued her son in the court because he did not support her in old age while he was earning money. Indeed a great deal of discord occurs as a result of the [604] conflicts between the loyalties and obligations towards 'the family of orientation' and 'the conjugal family' and the in-law relatives. It is often said that the newly married person has two minds, to denote the

[1] After the death of an Omda his sons are usually considered for succession; in fact, the Omda's sons, even during his lifetime, are addressed as Omdas.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

sickness is a pious deed. It is often told to a sick person that holy people have suffered from one ailment or another and have endured it willingly for God.

All this shows how the villagers' traditional notions about health and sickness are mixed with magical and religious beliefs; God is the afflicter as well as the healer; it is He who has fixed the life span of every person, and this cannot be lengthened or precipitated by a second, much less a minute, unless He wills it. Together with this, there is the belief that hope and propitiation cannot fail to produce some expected results in certain crises of life.

The village has experienced some measure of direct contact with modern medicine as a result of the establishment of a health unit by the Ministry of Health in 1936. This health unit is a wonderful building, situated on the southern border of the village, and is composed of a maternity section, an isolation ward, and a general section. It cost the Government about £E3,000, yet it has never functioned properly or systematically as doctors who came to it could hardly endure life in the village for more than six months, whereupon they tried every possible means to be transferred to towns. The villagers appreciated the health unit at the beginning, but their resentment to it was ironically aroused during the malaria and typhoid epidemic of 1943 on the grounds that sick people were taken away to the isolation ward, and dying away from one's relatives and home is the worst thing that can happen to any person. Their hostility towards it is expressed with reference to its unfortunate location, it being near the cemetery; thus going to the health unit has become psychologically a bad omen. However, the establishment of the health unit has given folk-medicine the greatest challenge, and at present the villagers are becoming increasingly interested in medicine as such, alongside their usual traditional cures. In serious cases the doctor's help is usually sought besides the traditional cures, and it is becoming a sign of social prestige to bring him into the home of the sick; but remaining in hospital for treatment or isolation for contagious diseases is still resisted.

Although one finds that the villagers have adopted certain items of material culture from the town, such as the use of manufactured goods, new types of vegetables, and some medicines, such adoption is a surface substitution. Their ideas about land ownership, the importance of children, family and clan solidarity, categories of respect relationships, sex dichotomy, supernatural sanctions, and the importance of ritual and ceremony in both social and religious life, remain almost unaltered.

There is, however, one feature in the village's social life that has undergone a certain amount of change as a result of changes in the economic conditions, and that is the role and function of leadership. Till very recently leadership has been mainly connected with families owning large plots of land; and such families assumed the responsibility and obligation for receiving guests from outside the village, providing hospitality for

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

municipal or provincial government officials, and representing the village in government affairs. The Omda of the village is elected on the basis of his land property, and has been the symbol of authority and responsibility on behalf of the village. Now, with the establishment of a police station, with the availability of more people who can write out complaints, with the decrease of the wealth of the village Omda, and consequently with his inability to provide hospitality in the traditional way, or to represent the village properly without extending his hands for help from the village, his authority has been flouted and people tend to send their complaints and disputes directly to the police station or to the provincial authorities. They complain that the Omda is not what he used to be in the good old days, responsible for reception and accommodation of government officials, generous to chance travellers, or to the needy poor.[1] In a conversation between the writer and the Omda, the latter answered the villagers' allegations by saying 'If the Omda or any other man in his position would stick to what these people expect from his generosity, he would run the risk of complete bankruptcy'. The decrease of the headman's authority reveals itself in the local remarks such as 'We have an Omda without land', or expressing their dissatisfaction with regard to some unsettled disputes, the villagers would say 'It is a village without an Omda'.

By the weakening of his position, the Omda has lost prestige and people compare him with his powerful and domineering predecessor 'during whose days no one could open his mouth' and 'no children could play about'. In fact, this brings us to the personal qualities of the present Omda who is actually a pleasant and genial personality. But the people think of authority as necessarily involving an assertion of power and domination. For the same reason people praised my informant Mahmoud when he was in office as head of the ghafeers. If one wields power, one must be powerful and forceful, the villagers say, otherwise one would not be respected and feared. Gibb and Bowen mentioned something similar to this attitude towards authority in the Arab provinces in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century. Al-Jabarti wrote: 'If the peasants were administered by a compassionate multazim, they despised him and his agents, delayed payment of his taxes, called him by feminine names. . . .' The prevalence of such a conception of authority confers privilege and prerogatives and is enforced upon the minds of the people by long centuries of misrule and oppression, supplemented by the religious habits of stoicism, passing into fatalism.[2]

The weakening of the role of leadership in the village is one of the main complaints that one quite often hears, either with regard to the prestige of the Omda, or with respect to the influence of the Arab councils or the relationship between the older and younger people. With disputes referred

[1] The tradition of hospitality in the village leads to the fact that bread and milk cannot be sold on a commercial basis without bringing shame to the seller. This tradition still persists while that connected with selling of milk is less rigidly observed.

[2] H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 205.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

Before people take up residence in a newly built house, or complete a well for a water-wheel, or use new machinery for irrigation or grinding corn, an ox or a sheep, or, if the people are poor, a fowl, must be killed on the threshold of the house, or close to the engine, or inside the well before the water-level is reached. This is done in case these spots may be haunted by *ʿafārīt*, who will trouble the owners if not first appeased by the blood of a sacrifice.

Within a year three people were killed by the irrigation machinery

FIG. 137. THE MOTHER OF THE BOY WHO WAS KILLED WAILING OUTSIDE THE ʿOMDEH'S ENGINE-HOUSE

belonging to the *ʿomdeh* of the village mentioned on p. 235 (see also Fig. 137). One, a woman, was killed not long before I arrived there, a boy was caught in the machinery and killed during my visit, and a man was killed in a similar way just after I had left. This *ʿomdeh* had made no sacrifice before using the engine, so a number of the villagers went to him and demanded that he should kill an ox on the spot. This he did, about a month after I had gone, and some of the blood of the animal was sprinkled on the engine. Apparently this has appeased the *ʿafārīt*, for I have heard of no accidents since the sacrifice was made!

There is an old Copt in that village, considerably over ninety

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XV

MUSLIM SHEIKHS AND COPTIC SAINTS

554 622 790 THE Egyptian peasants venerate a number of holy men and women to whom miraculous powers have been ascribed, either during their lifetime or after their death Such a holy person is given the title of sheikh. The word sheikh means literally an old man, and a man who is advanced in years is often addressed as Sheikh so and so as a term of respect. The word also signifies the head of an Arab tribe, the leading man in a village, and, finally, a learned man (*i.e.*, one learned in the sacred writings).

792 Certain of these holy men and women are venerated all over the country, the cults connected with them having become part of the general popular religion. But, besides these greater personages, there are innumerable local saints, who, however, often draw their devotees from localities beyond the boundaries of their villages.

792 798 766 941 However great may be the veneration paid to a saint in his lifetime, the honour he receives after his death is far greater. Among the Muslims it is the custom to erect over the grave of such a person a small whitewashed building, crowned with a dome, the outer and inner walls being usually decorated with line-drawings in colours and with inscriptions consisting of passages from the Ḳorān (see Figs. 139, 140). In many cases it is customary to provide a 'servant' (Fig. 138), or sometimes a number of 'servants,' whose salary is paid out of an endowment in land or money, augmented by the donations of those who visit the tomb. This man, or it may be a woman, is known as "the servant of the sheikh," and the office may descend from father to son. Besides the land surrounding the tomb, the sacred precincts may include a well, the water of which is supposed to be endowed with miraculous properties.

798 795 762 Sometimes a stone, or a heap of stones, or a tree or clump of trees, alone mark the last resting-place of a departed sheikh, but when there is a domed tomb a tree or trees are usually associated

E F 369 In a diversity so inorganic the various groups meet or overlap without real relationship or interpenetration, without even real knowledge of one another. The townspeople of Cairo and Alexandria know the countryside only by glimpses caught through a train or car window. The fellaheen, F 622 563 443 shut in by their fields and villages, know nothing of the city except through the *'omda*, the Greek grocer, or the landlord's agent.

Even in Cairo or Alexandria, where the aristocracy of Egypt is gathered together, the various groups only touch at their edges. Each lives in its own way, and is self-sufficient. Each has its own mentality, and its own 'Egypt'.

E F 369 423 On the one hand there are the Egyptian groups. These may be either Copts or Moslems. The sphere of the great landowners is not the same as that of Government officials. The clerical *milieu* of Al-Azhar is worlds away from the lay society of the Egyptian University. At receptions and festivities there are still only men present. Women have their own distinct groups. There is also the Palace, and the E separate circle of the Princes.

563 Then there are the foreign communities. These are certainly Egyptianised to some extent, but this is their only point in common. Each has its own clearly defined characteristics. The Syrians are active business men. The Jews are influential financiers. The English keep their distance at the Turf Club. The French and Belgians are concerned with the big companies — the Gas, and Water Companies, the *Crédit Foncier* (15), the Sugar Refineries, the Suez Canal — and the Italians are in building and commerce. The Greeks, who are more numerous, come closer to the masses of the people.

All these, which are essentially urban groups with their own characteristics and their own capital, act as a kind of leaven in the economy, finance and politics of Egypt. They are not a leaven to its people, for they never even mix with Egyptian society, and their progress leaves the fellaheen unmoved. Only from the outside and at a distance, through numerous intermediaries, do they knead the masses and take E F from them what they have to give.

421 134 The source of Egypt's wealth is the soil, and what it yields to the fellah's labours. But we must examine first of all the ownership of this soil. The whole structure of an agricultural country is built on its law of property.

In Upper Egypt, strung out along the Nile Valley, are 635
eight more provinces, named with one exception after their chief towns (*bandars*). These are, from north to south, Giza, Beni-Suef, Fayûm, Minia, Assiut, Girga, Qena and Aswan.

At the head of each province, called *mudiriya*, is a high official called the *mudîr*. His authority comes directly from the Ministry of the Interior, and he is frequently transferred. If he distinguishes himself he is brought nearer the capital, or even becomes a minister. On the other hand, if he falls out of favour he may be sent further south. He settles as the Government's representative in the more or less important but never very attractive town which is the capital of his *mudiriya*. As he is naturally more in touch with great men than with small, he has no direct knowledge of the fellaheen, who moreover cannot come into direct contact with him. They hear him spoken of, pay the taxes due to him, and catch a glimpse of him when an official visit brings him to their village. They think of him as being of a higher race than themselves, and revere him as a kind of demi-god. To them he seems all-powerful.

Outside the chief town the Mudeer's authority is exer- 634
cised by Maamûrs. Each *mudiriya* is divided into *markaz* or 625
police districts, from three to seven in number, except for Gharbiya, the most densely populated, which has twelve. The *maamûr*, a kind of chief constable, controls a police force distributed among the principal villages of his *markaz*. He is an executive officer enjoying very wide powers. The fellah thinks them unlimited, and has a corresponding respect for the man who exercises them.

The Maamûr is the fellah's king. The story is told of a fellah who said to the Khedive 'Abbas, in all good faith: 'God save you, and make you our *maamûr*.'

Yet even the *maamûr* does not know the fellaheen, their affairs, or their families, except through the *omda*. And the limited knowledge which the fellah has of politics or administration — citizen and voter though he be — comes to him through his *omda*, who for him is the sum of the law.

Each of the 4,000 villages of Egypt is governed by an 622
omda or mayor. He is nominated from among the leading inhabitants of the village which he rules and of which he often owns a part. Indeed he cannot be a candidate for

622 the post, by the law of 1895, unless he is owner of at least ten feddans. His appointment is usually preceded by rivalries which may turn into brawls, and followed by feuds that often end in death.

The *omda*, however, knows very well how to protect and even avenge himself, for he alone transmits information to the *maamûr*, and has sole charge of twenty or more night-watchmen (*ghaffirs*). Indeed, his chief duty is to ensure public security in the village and the surrounding country rather than to concern himself with improvements or with public health, to which he gives no more thought than those under him.

He represents his village district (*nahya*) before the *maamûr*, is responsible for any crimes committed in it which are reported, supports the *sarraf* in the business of tax-collecting, sees to the levy of men required for any given task, takes charge of the post and telephone, controls the carrying of arms, reports the outbreak of disease among people or cattle, and records births and deaths.

622 692 624 He is not paid by the Government, but apart from the value of the prestige attaching to his office, he has various privileges. He is exempt from taxation on five feddans, from forced labour, and from military service. This applies both to himself and to his sons. By custom, if not by right, the position of *omda* remains the privilege of one family. If the village is large and important, the *omda* is assisted by sheikhs, with whom he deliberates before giving his decisions. One of my pupils, the son of an *omda* in Upper Egypt, describes the procedure as follows: 'My father has 25 *ghaffirs* under his orders. From 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. they are on watch in the fields, with the exception of two who 622 remain on guard at the *omda's* house. If there is a trial, 692 it is conducted thus: The *omda* sits down in his *montaza*, 695 or outer garden, with a few sheikhs (men of some age and responsibility). The two disputants appear, and each gives his explanation of the matter. The *omda* gives his judgment, and tries to reconcile them. If they are not con- [681] tent to abide by his decision, he locks them up in jail until the following day and then sends them to the *markaz* with two *ghaffirs*.'

622 692 An *omda* may imprison for 24 hours, and impose a fine up to 15 piastres. There is no town-hall in the village. The

'omda's house takes its place. All day long he is receiving petitioners or travellers, unless he is going the rounds with some official or inspecting his own fields. He pays frequent visits to the chief town of the district, either for business or for pleasure. 622 692

This uncontrolled system, though it has many advantages for the Government, is full of drawbacks for the fellah, abandoned as he is to a master who knows no more about administration than about justice. There are indeed exceptions, but they are as yet few. The system is also prejudicial to public security. Crimes may easily be concealed, or even foisted upon the innocent, by such an autocracy. Village feuds usually owe their origin and persistence to the rivalries aroused by this office. 692 578

At Nahyet el Barûd, in the *markaz* of Abu Tîg, a new *'omda* was to be nominated. Among the candidates for the position two were outstanding, Sheikh Ahmed Abu Zeid and Sheikh Ahmed Farghali. One of these had been dismissed from the post by official action; the other, who had been *omda* in 1931, had also been dismissed by the Nessim Pasha Ministry. Both candidates were much feared in the district, and each had a large band of supporters. The committee which had to count the votes and then decide the election was formed of the *maamûr*, representatives of the neighbouring villages, and the *maazûn* of the village itself. However, the eligibility of the *maazûn*, as being a relative of one of the candidates, was challenged by the other. The authorities of the *markaz* then let it be known that the *maazûn* of another village would sit in his place. But on the day of the election, which was to be decided by a show of hands, it was seen that the first *maazûn* was still on the committee. His enemy's supporters objected, while his own friends upheld him, and the two parties came to blows. Worse than this, they made use of whatever weapons they could lay hands on, and a savage battle ensued. Before the police could intervene, three men had been killed and a number of others seriously wounded. The authorities arrested both candidates. The *mudîr* of Assiut gave orders that elections at Nahyet el Barûd and the neighbouring villages should be suspended until order was re-established (11th July, 1937). 622 666

Towards his superiors, whether officials or landlords, the fellah adopts an attitude of awesome respect, of servility 181

231
343 in bigger villages the house of a notable or a successful merchant.

251 Within easy reach of the village on the side facing the
343 fields are the *shoonas* or depôts for storing crops, together with offices and officials' houses, and the *ilzamiya* or compulsory school.

344 Now let us go inside the village. In a clean and access-
485 ible corner, better cared for than all the other houses, there may be sometimes a "rest-house" or *madyafa* of two or three rooms, kept by the *omda* for the use of Government officials and travellers. This building belongs either to the Irrigation Department or to the Ministry of the Interior. There are Government rest-houses in about 400 villages.

361 Let us penetrate to the heart of the little town. What
363 we have seen up to now has given us no idea of what to expect. All is dust and disorder. There is no plan or system, and not a single straight line. The only thing in common with a modern city is the congestion due to lack of building space. The alleys, strewn with dung and rubbish, are so narrow that three people cannot walk abreast; they are less than two yards wide. There is no hope of driving through, and hardly of riding through on donkey-back. However, in some places where there is more movement, the buildings are of necessity less crowded, as in front of the *omda's*
[346 house or the school, and in the business quarter, which
366] contains the little open shops of the tailor, the grocer, the potter, and the weaver, and, if the village is large enough, a café. There are many villages without a single shop, so that it is impossible to buy anything at all, except from an
[443] occasional pedlar. In some villages the system of barter is still in use, corn, for example, being exchanged for salt.

491 No main road ever goes through a village as in England
363 or France. The hamlet is a compact mass of buildings,
361 standing aside from the road, canal or river; wheeled vehicles cannot enter it. That is why so few foreigners, missionaries and, indeed, well-to-do Egyptians except the *'omda* and the *sarraf*, know anything of its inner life. To get a picture of
● 622 this, we must first describe the leading characters.
647 We have already met the *'omda* and the *sarraf*, who link the fellah to the Government, and the *nazir*, his link with the
443 landowner. Another connection with the civilised world is
563 provided by the *baqqal*, often a Greek, who performs the

ever be allowed to die of hunger. The mutual help of the men in field-work and of the women in housework, the more readily given as poverty is greater, deserves every commendation. The way in which the fellaheen will work to accomplish something in the common interest, when they are not under orders, shows what they are capable of. Yet when land, a woman, or an *'omda* is in question, rival parties are established and the feud is kept up in every family from generation to generation. Everyone in the village has to take sides. Neutrals are despised. The antagonism, though usually latent, will show itself suddenly over some trivial matter, such as the shifting of a boundary mark, a theft of manure, or a *gamoossa* trespassing. Then human life counts for nothing, and death takes a holiday, especially in villages where there is Arab blood in the fellah's veins.

Thus life is lived in constant insecurity. To feel this, one must spend a night in a village. As soon as night falls precautions are taken against a possible foe. The cattle, including the camel if there is one, are brought indoors and shut in the house. The family also take refuge together behind the great closed door. The head of the house often stays outside watching his field or his water, for the enemy is always on the prowl. As the shadows deepen, the dogs begin to bark and gunshots become frequent.

The shots come not only from the unsleeping watchman, trying to reassure himself and everyone else, but also from fellaheen armed going in defiance of the law. During harvest the fellaheen become even more suspicious, and may be seen with a rifle slung over their shoulders as they stand with their feet in water to gather the last tufts of cotton.

In May 1936 the village of Qalandol was divided into two camps over the selection of an *'omda* — the friends of Mahmud Bakr on the one side, and those of Aly Abbas on the other. Mahmud Bakr made some slanderous remarks about his opponent, and one morning his son was found dead in the fields. A few days later the sister of Aly Abbas was stabbed as a reprisal. After that, for a whole year, both sides watched and waited. Neither work nor journeys were undertaken alone, but always in groups. One market day, when crowds of fellaheen had come from villages near, a young man of the party of Mahmud Bakr was insulted by an opponent, whom he struck. At once the supporters of Aly Abbas

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

123.

Unfaithfulness.

×539 ●622 661 Šēḫ el-balad is the mayor or head of the village. This office still exists, although much of its power has been transferred to the ʿomde, another of the magistrates of the village.

Minni lē, minni lē,
ya-bnaiye? u-rdēti lē?
Šēḫ baladi wanaʾul-lo ē?
iddāni iš-šabbē, ṭaḥant ʿalē!

"Why dost thou shun me, why dost thou shun me,
My little maid? And why hast thou dealt so ill?"
"He is the shēkh of my village, and what can I say to him?
[731] He loaned me the buffalo-calf and I have ground with it!"

3. How could I, a poor girl, refuse the great man?
4. "Moreover, I was under obligations to him." The mills are often turned by buffaloes.